

SE12. Following the Public Pound – Community Development

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services presenting reporting statements for organisations funded under the Following the Public Pound (FPP) arrangements for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2018 for community development.

Funding was provided, by Children's Services to 4 external organisations to provide services which could not readily be provided by the Council. As part of the Following the Public Pound arrangements, reporting statements are prepared by the relevant monitoring officer for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee (External).

The four organisations were:-

| Organisation | Monitoring Service | Annual Funding (£) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Dennyloanhead Community Hall Ltd | Children's Services | 11,330 |
| Denny Community Support Project | Children's Services | 23,620 |
| Workers Education Association | Children's Services | 22,280 |
| Dobbie Hall | Children's Services | 14,360 |

The Director of Children's Services provided an overview of the services provided by the respective organisations and provided context in regard to the funding allocation to each organisation.

Members discussed the role of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) unit which provided support to the organisations and which monitored their performance against agreed outcomes.

In response to a question on the promotion of CLD services and specifically on the information available through the Council's website. Mark Meechan explained that the current CLD action plan, which was developed in partnership with key stakeholders, had been reviewed and would be presented to the Education Executive in September for approval. Once agreed the plan, which was more user friendly, would be available online. The action plan set out explicitly what services would be provided. Members highlighted the information set out on West Lothian Council's website as an example and suggested that the Council's online information was not as accessible.

Following a question in regard to Dennyloanhead Community Hall Ltd, Mr Meechan advised that the hall provided an extensive range of services aimed, in particular, at addressing inequalities in particular food poverty, citing examples of the projects provided.

At this point Councillor McLuckie declared the financial interest of family members in CLD and withdrew from the meeting.

Members then sought clarification in regard to the funding of community halls in the area, citing the West Lothian Council model in which halls were

constituted and which operated for the benefit of the community could apply for funding from an enterprise fund scheme, as an example. Mr Meechan explained that in addition to FTPP funding, community halls could apply for funding from a variety of sources, such as the Community Grants Scheme. CLD and CVS provided support on sources of funding and on the application process.

The committee asked whether the Council had benchmarked its CLD services against those of other local authorities. Mr Meechan explained that the CLD action plan had been developed in consultation with the CLD services in the Forth Valley area. The committee asked that the Director of Children's Services undertake a benchmarking review of the CLD service and report back.

Members highlighted the digital skills support provided by the Workers Education Association and asked for more detail. Mr Meechan explained that this was aimed at the 50+ age group and focussed on using "apps". Previously the work had focussed on packages such as Excel and Powerpoint but the offer had been repurposed to devices which people use daily. He explained that CLD provided support to "volunteer buddies" who assist the learners, thereby demonstrating the role of CLD in capacity building.

In response to a question on the rationale for providing funding to the Workers Education Association, Mr Meechan explained that it provided particular expertise that the Council did not have, in particular in relation to workplace literacy.

Funding for the Denny Community Support Project had decreased over recent years. Members asked what the impact of this had been on the services provided. Mr Meechan confirmed that the funding had reduced. Falkirk Council met 'core costs', however the project had been successful in attracting funding from other sources for programme costs. He confirmed however that the provision had reduced.

Decision

The committee noted the report and requested that the Director of Children's Services undertake a benchmarking review of Community Learning and Development service and report to a future meeting.